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# Congress of the United States

## U.S. House of Representatives

### COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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October 6, 2011

The Honorable Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.  
Inspector General  
Social Security Administration  
Office of Inspector General  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, Maryland 21235

Dear Mr. O'Carroll:

On September 30, 2011, an article in *The Wall Street Journal* disclosed that managers in the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) had instructed Social Security Administrative Law Judges and hearing office employees to set aside their disability cases the last week of September and refrain from issuing decisions until the following week, delaying the award of benefits for thousands of claimants who have been waiting for a decision for more than a year. The article goes on to say that the delays are a bid on the part of top managers to boost their own performance to win promotions or bonuses. If this intentional work slowdown story is true, this behavior is an abuse of the taxpayer dollars that support the program, a neglect of the Americans that depend on these critical benefits, and raises serious questions about those charged with leading this important program.

The Committee on Ways and Means has long focused on hearing office performance and ending the unacceptable backlogs that have plagued the disability program for years. In an effort to reduce case backlogs, Congress has over several years provided increases to SSA's administrative budget that would allow it to hire additional ALJs and staff.

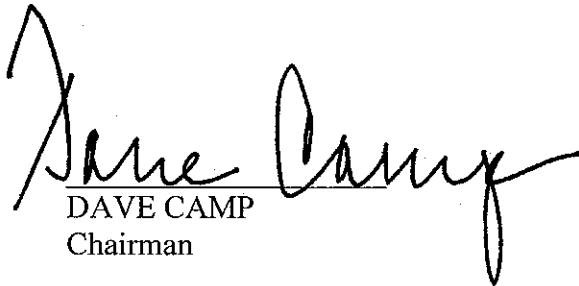
At a time when there is no margin for error in reaching agency goals, some of those with the daily responsibility of making sure this program works efficiently and effectively appear to be part of the problem. In fact, it sounds as though they expect to be rewarded for their outrageous behavior.

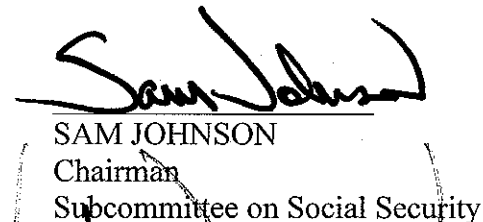
To assist in the Committee's oversight of the hearings process, we would appreciate your investigation of the following:

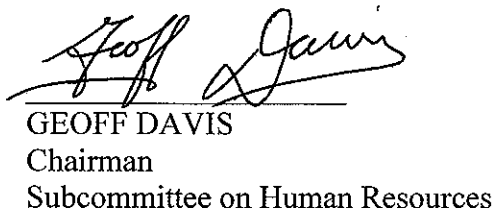
1. Management oversight and controls at the hearing offices in the seven states identified in the article – Florida, Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio, and Arizona – and at the appropriate regional offices and ODAR headquarters.
2. What complaints were made and when about "blackout" directives, and whether leadership took any corrective action.
3. Whether there is any pattern among managers of instructing employees to manipulate workloads for personal gain.

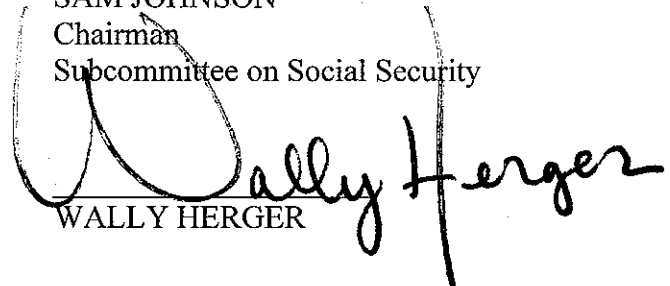
We look forward to your findings and understand that this request may necessitate more than one review from your office. Thank you for assisting the Committee in this endeavor. Should you have any questions, please contact Kim Hildred, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Social Security, at 202-225-9263.

Sincerely,

  
DAVE CAMP  
Chairman

  
SAM JOHNSON  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Social Security

  
GEOFF DAVIS  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Human Resources

  
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